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*The Folly and Wickedness of mis-
placing our Trust and Confidence.*

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S E R M O N

Preached before the
University of Oxford,

At St. MARY'S,

On *Wednesday, April 9. 1744.*

Being the Day appointed for a
GENERAL FAST.

By JOHN BURTON B. D. Fellow of
Eton College, late Fellow of C.C.C.

O X F O R D,

Printed at the THEATRE for *James Fletcher* Bookseller in
the *Turl*, and Sold by *M. Cooper* in *Pater-Noster-Row*,
LONDON. 1744,

Imprimatur,

GUALT. HODGES

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TO the HONOURABLE

James Oglethorpe Esq;

Brigadier General

AND

Commander in Chief of his
Majesty's Forces in *Georgia*
and *Carolina*.

SIR,

IN memory of an early Friendship
with which I have been honour'd
from the time we were Contemporaries
in the same College;

In testimony of my esteem for an
uncommon Example of disinterested
publick-spirited virtue;

And as an acknowledgement of
Favours, which the manner of con-
ferring has render'd doubly accept-
able,

This

This Discourse

Preach'd on an occasion, which
calls for the exercise of that Bravery,
by which Your character is distin-
guished, and inculcating those Reli-
gious principles, which You have
ever made the rule of Your con-
duct, with great respect

Is Dedicated

By Your most obliged Friend

And obedient humble Servant

J. BURTON.

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JER. 9. 23, 24.

Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his Riches.

But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

IN these words the inspired Preacher gives an authoritative admonition to a proud, luxurious, and licentious people; an instructive lesson of Humility, not less seasonable, than important; teaching them the folly and danger of placing their confidence in advantages and succours merely

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human ; and the reasonableness of trusting in God's providence for direction and support : and encouraging them with this assurance, that their acting under the influence of this *Religious* principle would be found the only true matter of their glorying, as it was the only true foundation of their security and happiness.

To see the universal degeneracy of manners and corruption of Religion, after the blessed Reformation of both effected by the pious King *Josiah*, was a circumstance doubly afflictive to a good man, so affectionately zealous for the true interest of his country. It was his fortune to be the last of the Prophets rais'd up by God before the final captivity of the *Jews* ; For the space of forty years (such was the divine mercy and long-suffering !) this faithful importunate monitor endeavour'd to awaken them into a due sense of their unhappy condition : He denounc'd the dreadful judgments of God ready to be executed upon an apostate, sinful people : He most pathetically represented to them the necessary effect of their national wickedness — nothing less than national destruction : He withal pointed out the only means of averting the threatned evils, *viz.* sincere repentance of their sins, and

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reformation of their manners. And indeed throughout the general course of his addresses he appears in the character of a *Preacher of Repentance*, and a *Prophet of Sorrows*, under the sad anticipation of the events he had foretold, with the tenderness of an afflicted father mourning over the wickedness and calamities of the *daughter of his people*.

If further we consider the *subject* of the various reproofs, exhortations, and admonitions given by the Prophet, we may from thence collect a sort of history of those times, and in some measure form a judgment of the manners of the *Jews*; which gave occasion to such severe instructions.

No nation under heaven was ever so immediately taught of God, taught in a manner so astonishing, by so many extraordinary interpositions of the divine power, the wonders of his Mercy and Judgment: at the same time no Nation ever appear'd so unattentive and insensible, amidst such uncommon arguments of conviction. They had forsaken the LORD their GOD and polluted his holy place with all the abominations of the *Heathen*; and, as a natural consequence, the shameless practice of immoralities in every shape accompanied their Irreligion and Idolatry. Thus they provok'd
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the LORD to anger; who therefore sent our Prophet *rising early and speaking* to them, as an Herald of his vengeance, proclaiming war and utter destruction by the hand of the King of *Babylon*: But, it seems, they were not at all affected with the apprehension of the threatned evils, which, as they vainly imagin'd, they had found means to escape. The admonition in my Text is given with a particular view to this ill-grounded, ill-placed confidence; implying that the sentence of the calamities denounc'd was unavoidable; that it was neither to be bought off by their treasures, nor to be resisted by their force, nor eluded by their cunning. Among the many instances of their folly, and wickedness, this was one, not the least remarkable, that they gloried in their imaginary *Wisdom, Might, and Riches*. They thought themselves much wiser than their divine Lawgiver; they were much too wise to put an implicit trust in GOD's Providence; (that Providence which had hitherto so wonderfully preserv'd them;) they had much improv'd upon their forefathers, and learnt new schemes of Political prudence, the refin'd policies of the idolatrous nations round about them, with whom they were forbidden to hold any intercourse of Amity, for
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fear of corrupting their morals: and, as our Prophet expresses it, *they were wise to do evil, but to do good they had no knowledge.* In the mean time they were industrious to delude themselves in a matter of the last importance, the knowledge of their own true state: They measur'd the flourishing condition of the kingdom by the Luxury of the people, and the happiness of their constitution by the general Licentiousness of manners: *They trusted in lying words which cou'd not profit,* and flatter'd themselves with the fond imagination of Peace and safety, when their calamity was coming upon them as an armed man: in short, a general infatuation went before their total destruction.

In the next place, 'tis observable, that, notwithstanding their subjection to a foreign Power, a sensible proof of their present weakness, they gloried in their *Might*: they had an overweening opinion of their powers both personal and national: they now thought themselves much improv'd in military skill and bravery; and in this presumption were forward to give unnecessary provocations, and bold defiances to their more potent Enemies. The consideration of their many extraordinary successes on record, which visibly pointed
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out their dependency upon God their almighty Deliverer, was perverted to a quite different purpose, and fill'd their hearts with *vain glory*, as *tho' their own power and the might of their own hands had gotten them this wealth*: they vainly fancied that they had *strength* as well as *counsel for the war*, and the mercenary Prophets prophesied smooth things, and flattered their vanity. And with regard to foreign enemies, and the danger of any formidable invasion, they seem'd to have no uneasy apprehensions, but on the other hand they as it were agreed to deceive one another into a state of security: The object of their fear was represented as very distant, and so was of course proportionably lessen'd in their view; at the same time the bulk of their own powers was proportionably magnified. And, besides their own proper strength, they, being wiser Politicians than their forefathers, had form'd notable alliances with other potent nations for mutual defence: They had strengthen'd themselves in the strength of *Pharaoh*, and trusted in the additional force of chariots and horsemen; *but they did not look unto the Holy One of Israel, neither did they seek the LORD*. Thus the vain conceit of their own mightiness and of the sufficiency of human means

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means made them insensible of their real weakness and the necessity of the divine protection; so that what they boasted of as their glory, in the event prov'd their shame and confusion.

Lastly, with regard to *Riches*, it might well be imagin'd that an exhausted plunder'd nation had but little reason to glory in this respect, yet even here they cou'd find matter for pride, as in this they chiefly plac'd their happiness. Our Prophet speaks concerning them, *from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to Covetousness — their houses are full of deceit, therefore they are become great and waxen rich — they devour bribes — they are waxen fat, they shine, they oppress the poor — the right of the needy do they not judge; — yet they prosper.* Thus they perverted the blessings of God into the Mammon of unrighteousness: and riches, gain'd by injustice and oppression, became incitements to vice and instruments of luxury. *When I fed them to the full, then they committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlot's houses; they were as fed horses in the morning, every one neigh'd after his Neighbour's wife: the harp, the viol, the tabret and the pipe are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord nor the operation of his hands*

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Thus the things, which shou'd have been for their wealth, prov'd unto them an occasion of falling. The sense of their prosperity, which shou'd have excited their gratitude to God, the giver of all good gifts, produc'd a quite different effect, *viz.* a general licentiousness of manners and a contemptuous neglect of the divine ordinances: on which account we find this threatening expostulation subjoin'd, *shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged of such a nation as this?*

Such was the state of the *Jews*; such their pride and misplac'd confidence, which gave occasion to the solemn admonition in my text.

How far the circumstances above-mention'd are applicable to the case of any *other* nation; or how far in particular *we* ourselves are affected by the imputation of the like faults, I shall not take upon me to determine; but leave every one, according to their several apprehensions of matters of so mixed a nature, to make the application. — But the general doctrine of my text, as teaching a lesson of humility, in those respects especially in which we are apt to glory, cannot be thought unsuitable to the present occasion. This is a day of publick humiliation, in which, under the serious con-

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conviction of our wickedness both personal and national we are assembled to implore pardon of almighty God, and deprecate his judgments, which we have most justly deserv'd: and while we consider the issue of things subjected to his arbitration, in these circumstances of difficulty and danger we humbly sue for the divine favour, hoping that he will graciously accept this act of Religious Homage, by which we disclaim all pretensions to self-sufficiency, while we express the sense of our own weakness and dependency; and give glory to God by acknowledging the necessity of his succour.

Thus saith the Lord, let not the Wise man glory in his Wisdom; neither let the Mighty man glory in his Might; let not the Rich man glory in his Riches.

This admonition is usher'd in with a solemn preface, setting forth the importance of the matter deliver'd, and the authority of the Prophet, and, in consequence of this, demanding an awful attention to his message. *Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken!*

By *Wisdom*, in which we are admonish'd not to *glory*, is meant, not that true Wisdom, which is the perfection of our rational nature, but something of a different kind, conversant a-

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bout different objects, and directed to a different End: viz. *Political* wisdom, or the skill of contriving and conducting certain means in order to bring about some secular end.

By *Might*, is to be understood not only our own personal powers, but all the combin'd powers of others also under our influence and direction.

As to the *other* object of vain-glory mention'd in my text — this is so obvious and familiar to the lowest apprehension, as to need not any explication.

By *glorying* is meant, not every degree of rejoicing in these advantages with complacency and gratitude; for these, being the gifts of GOD, and design'd for good purposes, are to be receiv'd with all thankfulness; but 'tis the over-rating their value, 'tis the setting our affections upon them in an unwarrantable degree; 'tis the misapplying them to wrong purposes, using them not as means in subordination to the glory of GOD, but as instruments of our private avarice and ambition; 'tis our trusting in them, either as the adequate cause or support of our happiness; this is that glorying, against which the caution in the text is directed.

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Here is laid down the true subject-matter of man's glorying, the only grounds of solid satisfaction viz. *Religious* knowledge, the knowledge of GOD, that *he is LORD* — the persuasion of his superintending providence, interested in the conduct of human affairs: the knowledge of GOD as manifested in the exercise of his several Attributes, the wonders of his Goodness and Vengeance, towards the sons of men: of his *loving kindness*, for the reward and support of the righteous; of his *Judgment*, in the chastisement of evil doers: of *Righteousness*, as in a general sense expressing the divine rectitude in all acts of distributive justice. A knowledge, not merely speculative; not a barren persuasion of a truth apprehended, and terminating in the fitnesses of things, from which it results; nor merely historical, as of a series of remarkable events in the several periods of time: but a lively, practical knowledge, accompanied with such reverential sentiments, and religious behaviour, as the conviction of those truths shou'd produce in our minds, viz. a firm trust in God's providence and an habitual conformity of our actions in subordination to his will.

The words of my text thus explain'd suggest

gest to our consideration these two points of doctrine,

1st, — The Folly and Wickedness of placing our confidence in means merely *human*, such as *Wisdom, Might, and Riches*.

2dly, The only *true* matter of glory viz. *Religious* knowledge, or trust in *God's* providence, which is the only foundation of our security and happiness : — from whence in the last place

I shall take occasion to apply the doctrine to the circumstances of the present solemnity.

I. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom* — “Vain man would be wise.” The desire of wisdom is implanted in his nature : this is the Idol which every man setteth up in his heart. And without doubt Wisdom, when sanctified by God's grace, is the highest ornament and perfection of human nature. The very shadow of it gives reputation : and men think they cannot be too covetous of a possession, which appears so very valuable ; yea they don't scruple to purchase the credit of it at the expence of their *moral* character. In acquisitions of this kind few men think themselves poor : however deficient they find themselves in other respects, yet in this they generally can find some reason to *glory*. But after all it seems
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strange that men shou'd so much disagree in their notions about it's nature and character, and yet all shou'd meet it in their different pursuits. Methinks the multitude of Pretenders gives some grounds for suspicion; and the justice of their several pretensions may with good reason be call'd in question: and 'tis to be fear'd that the very act of glorying in such attainments is rather a proof, that men have miscarried in their attempts: For, if they were really wise, they cou'd not but have known themselves better; they cou'd not but have been conscious of their own imperfections, and under such convictions they must have perceiv'd how little reason they had to *glory* in their wisdom.

There is methinks one consideration, which alone is sufficient to check the pride of man in this respect; and this is, as it were, written in the first page of the history of man from the Creation; where we read that our first Parents, out of a fond, ambitious desire to become wise as Gods, and to that end tasting of the forbidden fruit, at once, together with their innocence, forfeited their happiness. Behold now the wonderful effects of this new improvement in Wisdom! They discover'd their nakedness, their sin, and their misery.

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In this short piece of history we may perceive an argument, which proves the imperfection of human reason, even in it's most perfect state; and carries along with it a wholesome lesson of humility, sufficient to mortify our vanity, and shew the unreasonableness of glorying in our imaginary Wisdom. And surely it is a strange infatuation, that Man, who has lost the dignity of his first Parents, shou'd still retain their pride, and industriously cherish that very vice from which he deriv'd his unhappiness.

I might here mention many obvious considerations, which expose our folly in glorying in this respect — the weakness and imperfection of our intellectual powers, even in their best state disproportionate to the variety, and greatness of their respective Objects — the inconsiderable advances, which the most enlarg'd capacities have made in the world of Science — and with regard to the whole extent of Being, amidst that infinite variety of things, how little is that which is known by us in any degree? — and as to that, which falls within the reach of our powers, how little of it is known with certainty? — besides, the little knowledge of what most nearly concerns us, the knowledge of our own selves. So that the character of our Wisdom, in which we glory, however

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ever great it may appear, must still carry along with it the imputation of *ignorance, error, and uncertainty.*

It is further to be observ'd that our choice is often misplac'd; we are misled in our pursuits, and seek after that which will not profit us; which does not tend to serve any good moral purpose by improving our virtue, and promoting our true happiness. So that in such instances the observation of the wise man will be strictly verified, that, *in much Wisdom is much grief, and that he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.* Eccles. i. 18.

Now as to *Political Wisdom*, which I have principally in view, this, as it is the combin'd Wisdom of many Counsellors designing some important end, this perhaps may be thought more justly to afford matter for our glorying. But here we meet with many discouraging considerations. — As to the *object*, about which it is conversant, this is of a mixed, intricate nature; and there is generally found not less difficulty in the execution of a Scheme, than nicety in the contrivance. And as to the *foundation* on which the hopes of success are built, — nothing is more precarious and uncertain than that, which depends upon the fickle tempers and capricious humors of an unquiet

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unmanageable people ; and by the event it appears, that no kind of Wisdom is attended with more frequent and vexatious disappointments. 'Tis not only a very nice, but also an invidious and hazardous undertaking to moderate and adjust the claims and interfering interests of particular Persons or Nations, and to conduct them in subserviency to one general point : For, as these are subject to continual changes and vicissitudes, they must in proportion embarrass, and defeat the best-concerted measures, and give occasion for the exercise of Patience as well as Prudence. In short, so many contingent causes, by whose effects the issue of affairs is so much influenc'd, are to be taken into the calculation, that the wisest Politician cannot flatter himself with absolute assurance of success.

But further, there is something else, which must be consider'd, (which I fear men too often leave entirely out of the question) and this is the Interposition of God's providence, which by a secret, imperceptible influence gives a sudden and new turn to affairs, and at once by some unexpected stroke confounds the devices, and disappoints the counsels of the wise, and often produces stupendous effects by the operation of some very improbable, disproportionate

tionate causes. Thus the counsel of *Abithophel*, which was *as if a man had enquired at the Oracle of GOD*, was unaccountably by a weak opposition over-rul'd and rejected; and the contrary ill-concerted scheme propos'd by *Hushai the Archite* obtain'd the preference: For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of *Abithophel* to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon *Absalom*. 2 Sam. 17. 14. Let the mighty Politician, the Wise man of this world, remember the fate of *Abithophel*, and by this example be taught not to glory in his wisdom!

In the early ages of the world we find an extraordinary assistance of mens wisdom set in opposition to the designs of GOD's providence. They were resolv'd to prevent the dispersion of their families into several distant parts: the ambitious projectors resolv'd to make themselves a name, and began to build a City and a Tower, whose top might reach unto heaven. They for some time carried on their work with all imaginable success, and gloried in the effects of their confederate powers, as if nothing cou'd be restrain'd from them, which they had imagin'd to do. But the Lord came down to see the City and the Tower, which the children of men builded. And now behold the mighty project was at once defeated by the

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secret irresistible operation of almighty power. *The Lord confounded their language, that they understood not one another's speech, and they left off to build the City; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.* Genes. 11. 9.

And from hence I am led to observe further that Schemes of secular policy, as they are often directed to some unlawful End, and as often conducted by unwarrantable means, seem in a more particular manner to provoke the divine interposition, being thus carried on in a deliberate and open disregard and violation of the Divine Laws. And on this footing we may account for the surprizing disappointments, which often happen amidst the highest probabilities of success. *Wo to the rebellious children, saith the LORD by his Prophet Isaiah, which take counsel, but not of the LORD; the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, — and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.* Isa. 29. 14. The Children of this world may perhaps be wise in their generation as to the contrivance and conduct of the means, with regard to the End, which they propose: But still they have but little reason to *glory* in their Wisdom, since they are mistaken in the first and fundamental part of prudence, they are mi-

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mistaken in the choice of the End: their designs are in themselves wicked, and carried on in opposition to the rule of the divine Will; and therefore deservedly bear the imputation of the worst of follies. On this account our Prophet thus *expostulates* with the Jews. *How do ye say we are wise? — the wise men are ashamed, they are dismay'd and taken: Lo they have rejected the word of the LORD, and what wisdom is in them?* Jer. 8. 8, 9. Upon the whole, it will be found in the final issue of things that obedience to the will of God is the instance of our truest prudence, that our piety is our best policy. *The fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom, and to depart from evil that is understanding:* This is that wisdom in which alone we ought to glory, the knowledge of God, which alone is able to make us wise unto Salvation.

2dly. *Let not the Mighty man glory in his Might.* — If this be understood with regard to bodily strength, 'tis obvious to observe how little reason we have to glory in those advantages, in which many of the brutal part of the creation far excell the stoutest among the sons of men. As it is a constitutional blessing, and the gift of Nature, in this point of view how unreasonable is it to boast of that
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as our own, which we have receiv'd; — to take a pride in that, as meritorious in ourselves, which is deriv'd from the unmerited divine bounty, the sense of which by this act of boasting we seem to disclaim? And further how vain and foolish is it to place our confidence in that happiness, the possession of which we cannot ensure to ourselves; which is continually liable to be impair'd by diseases, to be destroy'd by untimely violence from without, and must otherwise in time fail by a gradual necessary decay? If in such respects we have any reason at all to glory, 'tis this, that we have not abus'd our rational powers by any misapplications or criminal excesses.

But at present I shall rather consider this branch of my Text in a *Political* view, as applicable to national powers and combin'd interests. Here we have a more enlarg'd idea of strength; here we imagine that we find some reason to glory. There is something glorious and terrible in the appearance of military might and well-appointed armies, which is apt to swell our heart with pride, and an extravagant conceit of our own superior force: and where shou'd we more readily place our confidence, than in these probable means of defence and safety? — *when a strong man arm-*

ed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace. —
 But still it must be consider'd that *a stronger*
than he may come upon him and overcome him,
and take from him all the armour wherein he
trusted, and divide his spoil. Now where there
 is apprehension of danger, there is a necessity
 of caution; and those circumstances, which
 render caution necessary, cannot be suppos'd
 to afford any just matter of *glorying*.

'Tis in truth a difficult task to form a just
 estimate of our powers; in this respect we are
 apt to flatter our vanity, and deceive ourselves
 by a partial representation. Power is indeed
 to be consider'd in a comparative view; but
 we don't take care to make the comparison by
 a right standard, nor to carry it on to it's just
 extent. We in this, as well as other moral
 respects, love to deceive ourselves: we are
 happy enough, if we think ourselves a little
 better than our Neighbours: We pride our-
 selves in this superiority of strength; and when
 we are become in any degree formidable, we
 improve the pleasing notion, and begin to
 imagine ourselves irresistible; and go on glo-
 rying in our might, till at last we feel the sad
 conviction of our folly in our punishment. It
 was a very pertinent and upbraiding expostu-
 lation which *Joash* King of *Israel* us'd to *Ama-*
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ziah King of Judah on this occasion. *Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory of this, and tarry at home: for why shouldest thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee? But Amaziah would not hear: — and Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to their tents.* 2 Kings 14. 10, 11, 12. However agreeable a subject it may be to glory in our imaginary might, yet in the nature of things this is a piece of wrong policy: for this overweening conceit of our own mightiness naturally betrays us into security; and security betrays us into certain danger; and thus the event brings a shameful proof of our real weakness. At the same time our arrogance and ostentation calls out the insidious attention of our enemies, and admonishes them to stand upon their guard, and take every advantage of our negligence and presumption. By these means it has often happen'd that very powerful Princes have been overcome by unequal inferior forces of a despicable people, whom they have wantonly provok'd, and injur'd.

But after all, let us suppose our Might to be ever so great and really formidable, yet we cannot flatter ourselves with *assurance* of success, as long as we act dependently, under the
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controul of a superior power; which, as in general it is interested in the conduct of human affairs, so in a more particular manner in the more important events, in the issue of wars, and the fate of cities and kingdoms. The over-ruling Providence of Almighty GOD is to be taken into consideration, by which we see the success of battles frequently determin'd contrary to common expectation founded on the ordinary probable effects of secondary causes. The wisest of Men who exhorts us *to do with all our might whatsoever our hand findeth to do*, who by this precept encourages industry, and recommends a strenuous application of all means requisite to obtain the End propos'd, at the time advises us not to depend upon the certainty of success; immediately subjoining this observation, that notwithstanding all our endeavours according to the rules of the best policy, the event might not answer our reasonable hopes. *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.* Eccl. 9. 11. There is an invisible superior Power which controuls the activity of second causes, and bringeth wondrous things to pass; which, by an unexpected interposition, delivereth them that have no helper, and *scattereth the proud in the imagination*

gination of their hearts. — For the proof of this point we need not have recourse to ancient histories: there is a most remarkable example still fresh in our observation. We have beheld the house of *Austria* in great prosperity, renown'd for Policy, and glorying in their Might, envied and dreaded by their rival Neighbours. We have beheld this very Power, once vainly deem'd exorbitant, by a fatal coincidence of unforeseen circumstances, and an unaccountable vicissitude of affairs most unmercifully humbled: We have beheld a magnanimous Princess encompass'd by variety of misfortunes; at once on all sides attack'd and over-power'd by a perfidious confederacy, dispossest of her hereditary dominions by Princes under the obligation of treaties engag'd to ensure to her their possession; and at length reduc'd to such an extremity of distress, as might excite the compassion of any generous Enemy. We have beheld another sudden change in her delivery and recovery, more wonderful than that of her fall: Amidst circumstances of the saddest calamities and despair, at once a glorious light sprang out of darkness: the means of preservation came from a quarter, from which they were least expected: A despis'd, oppress'd, and (to the honour of the *Protestant* name

name be it mention'd) a persecuted people willingly offer'd themselves in defence of their distressed Sovereign: their hands were strengthen'd in a righteous cause; and the divine blessing crown'd their arms with success. The disturber of publick peace and the destroyer of nations was at once confounded and dismayed: the boasting heroes, who had already in imagination divided the spoils of a conquer'd country, were driven back with shame, — their invincible Armies fled before the irregular undisciplin'd troops of unknown, condemned Barbarians. And now, *how are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perish'd?* what a severe and seasonable check has been given to the wicked ambition of that exorbitant Power, *which made the earth to tremble and did shake?* — *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning?* *how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations?* — *How hath the oppressor ceased?* — *he who smote the people with a continual stroke is himself persecuted, and none hindreth.* This deliverance from the common Tyrant of Europe and oppressor of publick Liberty, an event so important in it's consequences, so much beyond what we looked for, we may with good reason ascribe to the particular interposition

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of God's gracious providence, and esteem this the *Lord's doing, which is so marvellous in our eyes.*

Now This, and other like instances, which occur in sacred and profane history, should be consider'd by us in a moral view, as containing so many instructive lessons of humility, that *the mighty man shou'd not glory in his might.* And indeed in every relation of such facts we may read the plain reason of the divine proceeding in this manner, *viz.* on proper occasions to assert his prerogative over the sons of men, to remind them of their weakness, and state of dependency on his Almighty power and goodness; to the end that, when *GOD's judgments are thus seen in the earth, they may learn righteousness.*

The course of God's dealing with the *Jews* in this point particularly deserves our notice. We find that, whenever they strengthen'd themselves according to the military policy of the nations round about them, and presum'd upon success by the use of the most probable human means, which they were forbidden to seek after, as implying a diffidence in God's power and Goodness, they were generally disappointed in their most sanguine hopes, and felt themselves really weakned by the accession of a foreign

reign strength, which they provided for their better security. *The Lord had said, Thy King shall not go down to Egypt to multiply horses* Deut. 17. 16. Foreseeing that this addition of a new formidable force wou'd lead them to trust in the Arm of flesh, and shake off the sense of their dependency on him, their all-mighty deliverer. And therefore, when they afterward out of their abundant wisdom, and distrust of God's providence had recourse to this very expedient, God by his Prophet Isaiah denounced woe against them; *Wo to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses and trust in chariots, — but look not unto the holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD. — Therefore the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.* Isa. 30. 1, 2, 3. and 31. 1. And so indeed in the issue of things it prov'd: they were severely *punish'd with their own inventions, and brought down in their wickedness.* Be it here observ'd, that however the peculiar circumstances of the *Jewish* nation might give more immediate occasion to a direction of this kind: yet the reason of the divine proceeding is of *general* use, and affects all mankind. GOD hereby encourages our trust in his providence; and discourages our dependance upon means
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merely human, and convinces us of their insufficiency by the frequent disappointments which we experience. *Let not the Mighty Man therefore glory in his Might* which may be defeated and over-ruled by superior power, let him not presume upon success which is not in his own disposal: let not his heart be lifted up with pride, lest he be found in effect to fight against God whose protection and assistance he seems to disclaim by transferring his confidence to the efficacy of human means. *Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. Jerem. 17. 4.*

3dly, *Let not the Rich man glory in his Riches.* These indeed in no point of view seem to administer just matter of glorying. If they are hereditary, there is no merit in the possession: If they are acquir'd by industry, they perhaps carry with them as little proof of our wit and good sense, as they do of our honesty; for 'tis observ'd that Fools and Knaves know the way to grow rich. They are to be consider'd as accidental ornaments of life, of no intrinsic value in themselves any farther, than as they are instrumental to procure other advantages. On the whole, as they are the gifts of fortune, or, in the *Christian* sense, the kind
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dispensations of GOD's providence, they are to be accepted with all thankfulness, and applied to those good purposes, for which they were intended by the gracious Donor. Where his intention is not answer'd, if we at all *glory, we glory in our shame*. 'Tis an infamous character by which they stand distinguish'd in holy scripture, where they are call'd the *Mammon of unrighteousness*, which carries with it this supposition, that they are generally either acquir'd by unwarrantable means, or abus'd in their application. To glory in them by way of ostentation is a ridiculous, and withal a dangerous vanity. The admir'd possession, while it excites the avarice or envy of the beholder, does in a manner invite the attempts of the cunning Knave, or violent Robber; and the ambitious Owner at length feels the precariousness of his tenure, by being dispossess'd of his over-valued property. An instance of this kind we meet in the history of the good King *Hezekiah*. He in gaiety of heart, and pleas'd to display the riches and magnificence of his kingdom, shew'd to the friendly ambassadors of the King of *Babylon* the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, — and all that was found in his treasures; there was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion, that *Hezekiah*

kiah shew'd him not. Is. 39. 2. Let us observe what follow'd: then said *Isaiah*, *Behold the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord .v. 6.* What *Isaiah* here foretold, was fully accomplish'd in the days of our Prophet, together with the final destruction of *Jerusalem*. — The Royal Preacher among other vanities under the sun has observ'd this as a *sore evil, namely riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.* Eccles. 5. 13. On the whole, the Rich man may from these considerations learn not to *glory*, not to trust in *his riches*, as the certain means of his security and happiness; since they are often found to prove the mischievous temptations, which endanger his safety, and occasion his ruin.

I need not in this Audience proceed to insist upon the obvious common arguments, by which the precept of my Text is enforc'd: it may be sufficient to remark briefly the wickedness and mischief of glorying in our Riches: He who trusteth in riches, the *Covetous man*, saith the Apostle, *is an Idolater*; inasmuch as he transfers to the creature that high degree of affection and devotion, which is due to the Creator only. And a general infatuation of
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judgment is the effect of this, as well of other kinds of Idolatry: he is lost to all sense of true Religion and virtue; for no man can serve two Masters, and at once obey contradictory commands; *it is impossible to serve God and Mammon.* Matt. 6. 24. If, says holy Job, *I have made gold my hope or have said unto the fine gold, thou art my confidence, I should have denied the God that is above.* Job 31. 24, 28. Our blessed Saviour has remark'd *how hard it is for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God.* Mar. 10. 24. 'Tis almost a miracle if they become good Christians. When men put their trust in that which is uncertain, and are not asham'd to glory in what they abuse, we may with reason call their good sense and virtue in question. 'Tis the character given of *Ahab*, the most rich and covetous among the Kings of Israel, *that he sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord.* King. 21. 24. In truth a person in such circumstances is subject to great temptations; he is very apt to abuse the advantages of his fortune, and exempt himself from the common obligations to the practice of religious and social duties; and to imagine that the defect of all these may be supplied by the dextrous application of that universal substitute, his riches: he

he corrupts others by bad example, as well as principle; and the mischief of his wickedness does not terminate in his own person, but eventually affects the interests of the Community, in which he has, as far as his influence reach'd, extinguish'd the sense of honour and publick integrity by the successful arts of a general corruption. *Lo! this is the Man, that took not God for his strength, but trusted in the multitude of his riches, and strengthen'd himself in his wickedness!*

Having thus remov'd the *false* grounds of human trust, and having pointed out the folly and wickedness of glorying in any secular advantages, in *Wisdom, Strength, and Riches*, it now remains, that I direct your thoughts to the *true* foundation of security, the *understanding and knowledge of GOD, that he is the LORD*, the firm belief of *GOD's* providence, superintending and directing all human affairs to the best purposes: *Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, Judgment, and Righteousness, for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.*

In these words *GOD* sets forth his universal sovereignty, and his moral attributes, in the effects of which we are greatly interested, and
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in the imitation of which our chief glory consists. *The LORD is King, the earth may rejoice, yea the multitude of the Isles may be glad thereof.* The consideration of GOD's Sovereignty is a just matter of joy to all people, as it unites them in one common relation of allegiance and dependency upon the Universal Lord of the Creation, and from his justice and goodness derives to them the comfortable assurances of his favour and protection. *Blessed is the people, O Lord, that can rejoice in thee: for thou art the glory of their strength: in thy righteousness shall they make their boast, and in thy loving-kindness thou shalt lift up their horn.* 'Tis this perswasion, amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life, that administers the most solid comfort and satisfaction, *that the LORD is King be the people never so impatient, that he sitteth between the Cherubims be the earth never so unquiet.* Trust in his providence is the only steady principle, of the most extensive influence, adequate to every circumstance in life; the only true foundation, on which we may build our hopes of tranquillity and happiness.

As for all worldly advantages — these are found to be unsatisfactory in the fruition, of a precarious tenure, and temporary duration;

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treacherous supports in the day of necessity; broken reeds, which pierce the hands of him who leaneth on them. But *the hand of the Lord is not shorten'd; his righteousness and mercy are over all his works.*

Let us consider GOD's *universal* providence, as presiding over the whole world. And here, notwithstanding that we perceive many seeming inequalities in his dispensations, yet upon the whole we find abundant reason to acquiesce in this general perswasion, that all these are wisely adjusted by the balance of his holy Sanctuary; and that *the Judge of all the Earth must do right.* We cannot indeed trace out the secret ways of GOD's providence; *his Judgments are like the great deep*: unfathomable by the short line of our imperfect apprehensions, but *his righteousness standeth like the strong mountains*, eminent and conspicuous, steadfast and immoveable.

While we consider GOD's *particular* providence more especially interested in the support of good men, in this view we perceive the encouragement and reward of our piety, and the best motive to perseverance; being assur'd that in the final issue *all things will work together for good to them that love GOD.* In truth, the consideration of all the divine attributes has a
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practical tendency; in all of them we may read some lesson of instruction, which we shou'd apply to good moral purposes. When we consider GOD under the character of the LORD, we perceive the relation in which we stand as his creatures and subjects, and the duties from thence resulting; a *passive* submission to his Sovereignty, and humble dependency on his good providence, and an *active* obedience to his will, in the ready performance of all his commands. How amiable is the character of his goodness and *loving-kindness*, which he exercises towards the children of men? The sense of it, while it excites our gratitude, at the same time encourages our virtue, and provokes our imitation: *If God has so loved us, how ought we to love one another!* While we consider the severity of his *judgment* in the punishment of the wicked, we apply to ourselves the admonition contain'd in such examples: our fears awaken our caution and circumspection, and the *terrors of the Lord persuade us to flee from the wrath to come.* — In his *Righteousness* we contemplate the supreme pattern of moral rectitude; in the imitation of this consists the perfection of our rational nature: to endeavour to be in proportion *perfect, as he is perfect*, is the true ambition, and chief glory of a
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Christian. The consideration of this shou'd influence our whole moral conduct, and produce such an habitual conformity of action to this supreme rule, that hereafter we may stand before our Judge without fear, and with joy receive the Awards of his distributive Justice.

Thus to *understand and know him* in the exercise of his several attributes does in effect take in a whole system of Religion. But the principal doctrine here to be insisted on is the *trust in his providence*, in opposition to the *false grounds of human confidence*, mention'd in the first branch of my text. Accordingly I have at large pointed out the insufficiency of all powers and advantages merely human, in order to call off our attention from pleasing delusions to acts of religious homage, in the acknowledgment of the divine attributes; which otherwise we should be apt to disregard. 'Tis observable that the wisest of the sons of men most frequently and feelingly inculcates the lesson of universal humility: From his own dearly-bought experience he pronounc'd *all things under the sun to be vanity and vexation of spirit*; all but Religion, *the fear of God, and keeping his commandments*. — He disclaims the sufficiency of his own power and understanding, and places the only ground of security in
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the all-sufficiency of the divine Wisdom and power. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thy own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* What surer ground of joyful hope and satisfaction can we find, than that which is contain'd in this consideration, that the Lord is both our sun and shield, our light and our defence; that we have infinite Wisdom for our direction, and infinite Power for our support? *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a Tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yeilding fruit.* Jer. 17. 7.

III. I now proceed in the last place, to make a brief application of the doctrine to the circumstances of the present Solemnity.

The institution of this day of publick humiliation will, I hope, have the intended good effect on our minds, and introduce an habit of seriousness and recollection, and dispose them to receive and rightly apply the moral lesson contain'd in my text: that we may from thence learn to *know GOD* and *ourselves*: to know God, as he stands here represented under the
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incommunicable character of the LORD, the almighty Governour of the universe: to know that *wisdom and might* are his; and *he changeth the times and the seasons*; *he removeth Kings, and setteth up Kings*; — to know that he exerciseth *loving-kindness* — that he is the disposer and giver of those worldly blessings, which we deserve to forfeit by frequent misapplications and abuses: — that he exerciseth *judgment* in the infliction of punishment on sinners; such as our wickedness both personal and national has justly provok'd: — to know, that he exerciseth *righteousness* as judge of all the earth, a defender of the oppressed, and avenger of injustice: — to know ourselves as destitute of all inherent merit and goodness, having nothing properly our own, but what wou'd cover our face with shame and confusion: — to know ourselves to be weak, indigent, and *sinful* creatures; depending upon God's goodness for the pardon of our sins as well as preservation of our Being. — Under such convictions how is the pride of man mortified, and every thought which exalteth itself brought into subjection, and every imaginary excellency at once annihilated in the presence of God! — Let the mightiest among the sons of men *fall down before him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their*

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crowns of glory before his throne, saying, thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. Rev.

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To express the sense of our dependency upon the supreme Being is at *all* times our bounden duty, and reasonable service. But we are more particularly call'd to the exercise of this religious act in our *present* circumstances of difficulty and danger, *when our host is going forth against the Enemy*. This day of trouble is withal a day of rebuke to our vanity, and self-sufficiency; and, as it excites a serious solicitude for the decisive event, withal directs our application to the Supreme power for his direction and succour, teaching us to distrust our once boasted abilities, and put our confidence in the *LORD of Hosts*, who giveth victory in the battel.

To proclaim a Fast and call a Solemn assembly, to implore the divine assistance, while we are engag'd in an unrighteous cause, while we act in open violation of the laws both of God and Man — what else is it but a profanation and mockery of religion, and in effect a secret defiance to the divine justice? With satisfaction we may observe that this is far from
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being our case — It behoves our Enemies to consider, how far they are affected by the reflection. With regard to *Ourselves*, (whatever the issue of things may be) let us remark, (which is no small consolation to a serious mind) that the War, in which we are at present engag'd, is just and honourable; not enter'd into upon unwarrantable motives of Avarice, and Ambition, nor carried on by unwarrantable means, by Cruelty, Treachery, and Injustice. And if to shew *loving-kindness* to those, to whom we stand allied by mutual interest and friendship, whom by the faith of solemn treaties we are oblig'd to protect and support — if to exercise *righteousness* and *judgment* in assisting and relieving the oppressed, and in restraining the violence of the oppressour — if the *Lord delights in these things*, in these instances of kindness and justice, we may, without the imputation of arrogance, recommend our cause to Him who judgeth right, in humble confidence that he will give success to our Arms, that his especial blessing will attend our endeavours which are conducted in subordination to his Laws, and in imitation of his Attributes.

As to the real state of *our Nation*, — how far we are in fact possess'd of those worldly advan-

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tages in which men are so apt to glory, — neither my business nor inclination leads me to enquire. It may be sufficient to our present purpose to make this general reflexion, that upon supposition that we really *exceeded* other nations in *Wisdom*, in *Might*, and *Riches*, yet, according to the doctrine of my text, 'twou'd be an instance of criminal arrogance and bad policy to *glory* in them. But on the other hand, if, upon a comparative view of things, we find ourselves *deficient* in these advantages, we then withal must find more abundant reason to put our trust in the *divine* favour and protection.

With regard to our *Enemies* — I cannot help observing on this occasion, that they have all along appear'd to act in opposition to the precept of my text. — Not to mention that particular people, who have ever been distinguish'd by that moral quality, which, as the Wise man has observ'd, generally *goes before a fall*, whose glory is now become their shame, — I shall rather consider the case of the *Wise*, the *Mighty*, the *Rich*, glorying in their respective advantages, as exemplified in the character of *another* nation, — our ambitious, formidable Neighbours: a nation our rivals in commerce by their situation, and who in their constitution both civil

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and religious are our irreconcilable enemies; who have already weaken'd and half conquer'd us by the communication of their dear-bought follies and vices: whose friendship has been ever treacherous; *who lay their hands on such as be at peace with them and break their covenant; the words of their mouth are softer than butter, having war in their heart; their words are smoother than oil, and yet be they very swords.* — But thanks to their pride or impatience, or the importunity of their Allies, they have in one instance appear'd to act contrary to the rules of their Policy, — they have for once acted ingeniously by making an open declaration of war; their hostilities being no longer dissembled are less to be dreaded. This is that nation which has long gloried in the superiority of their Wisdom, their might, and their riches, the foundation of that extensive Monarchy, to which they have been continually aspiring. With regard to secular Wisdom, — we have seen the ablest Politician of this Age conducting without opposition the best-concerted Schemes: we have seen arbitrary power directed to the best advantage — unanimity in counsels, secrecy and dispatch in the execution. The opportunities of a long-continued Peace have been strenuously improv'd in carrying on a beneficial commerce,

merce, and the acquisition of immense riches. *Their tongue goeth thro' the world, the people fall unto them, and thereout suck they no small advantage.* We have seen their power and strength grow up in proportion to their riches. Their policy and wicked cunning has embarrass'd and embroil'd all nations: and their wealth became the instrument of an universal corruption: they have compass'd sea and land with their fleets and armies: they boasted in the wantonness of power that they cou'd do mischief; and glorying in the presumption of uninterrupted success, broke thro' every obstacle to their ambitious designs, trampled on the rights and laws of nations, violated the public-faith of treaties, *solemnly given, and dearly bought.* We have seen acts of treachery and injustice supported by acts of violence; and those dominions invaded, which they stood engag'd to protect and ensure; countries ravag'd, and defended cities laid into ruinous heaps. I leave you to pursue the sequel of this surprising history: sufficient to my present purpose it is to observe that the LORD, *who exerciseth judgment and righteousness for all that are oppressed with wrong,* hath by a visible sanction ratified the precept of my text; and by this example hath taught us how vain, how dangerous

rous a presumption it is to glory and confide in our own Wisdom, Might and Riches, in opposition to GOD's laws, or independently of his protection.

Let our *Enemies* then glory in the *arm of flesh* and in the arts of secular policy: *the nations may make much ado, and the kingdoms may be mov'd; but the LORD who sitteth on high is mightier, and laugheth all the heathen to scorn: he turneth the counsel of Abithophel into foolishness, and scattereth the people that delight in War.* To him let us give glory by submitting ourselves to the conduct of his good providence; always endeavouring to express a truly religious sense of his attributes, by conforming our actions to the supreme moral pattern, and by paying an unreserv'd obedience to the divine Commands. So will the LORD be entreated to exercise his *loving-kindness* towards us; *that we, being deliver'd from our enemies, may serve him without fear, and rejoice in the GOD of our Salvation.*

Happy are the people who are in such a case: Yea blessed are the people who have the LORD for their GOD!

ERRATA.

Page. 25. l. 1. instead of *condemned* read *contemned*. l. 18. insert *Kingdoms* after *shake*.

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